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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. STADTHAGEN (Nicaragua)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Stadthagen (Nicaragua), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/25, A/50/171, A/50/182-E/1995/66 and Corr.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/366, 371, 400 and 407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475 and 518; A/C.2/50/2)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/74 and Add.1, A/50/218, 453 and 515)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/50/227-E/1995/99, A/50/374 and 516)

1. Mr. LEUNG (Fiji) said that, as a small island developing State, Fiji attached the greatest importance to the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which was at the vanguard of efforts to promote and enhance global sustainable development, environmental monitoring and providing policy options and advice to Governments. A number of recent decisions of the UNEP Governing Council gave cause for optimism that Fiji and other developing countries could expect concrete action for the protection of land and marine biodiversity. Consistent with its policy of working in partnership with the United Nations system, Fiji had offered its candidacy for membership in the Commission on Sustainable Development.

2. Fiji welcomed Governing Council decision 18/34 which called for an integrated approach within UNEP to addressing the issues of relevance to small island developing States. Other United Nations bodies, such as the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, would also have a role to play, as the issues involved were cross-sectoral. Fiji also welcomed Governing Council decision 18/31 on the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities; the Fijian people had, for centuries, depended on the sea for their livelihood.

3. His delegation commended the Economic and Social Council for emphasizing the urgent need for measures to reduce the particular vulnerability of developing island countries to natural disasters. It was disappointed, however, that the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/50/3) made no mention of the current status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

4. In conclusion, his delegation found considerable merit in the suggestion that the General Assembly, through the Second Committee, should provide guidance on the priorities for future work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

5. Mr. CUI Tiankai (China) said that, since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the international community had gained a better understanding of the interrelationship between sustainable development, population and social development. Regrettably, however, the developed

countries had as yet to fulfil their commitments with regard to official development assistance and transfer of technology.

6. The root cause of global environmental degradation lay in the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption pursued by developed countries and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had, quite rightly, set forth common but differentiated responsibilities for change. China therefore opposed any attempts at imposing new obligations on developing countries through amendments or protocols to the Convention. Unilateral protectionism on the pretext of environmental protection was eroding the multilateral trade system, and hindering the economic growth of developing countries. The international community should ensure that trade and environment supported, rather than obstructed, each other.

7. At the special session of the General Assembly which was to be held in 1997 pursuant to resolution 47/190, it would be essential to adopt an integrated approach to environment and development. That meant stressing not only the interrelationship between environment and development but also the fact that sustainable development entailed efforts in all sectors. Since one of the purposes of the special session would be to identify gaps in the implementation of the decisions adopted at Rio, particular attention should be given to the failure of the developed countries to fulfil their commitments regarding financial resources and transfer of technology, as that was severely constraining the ability of the developing countries to implement Agenda 21.

8. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that the implementation of Agenda 21 opened new vistas for attaining the objective of sustainable development. Israel attached great importance to the recent conventions regarding desertification, biodiversity and climate change, and had taken a number of measures towards their implementation. It was currently planning to organize, in cooperation with the United Nations and other organizations, an expert workshop on the commitments in those conventions.

9. The importance of adequate funding mechanisms could not be overemphasized, for they represented the key to environmental protection. The Global Environment Facility must be replenished and strengthened. The role of UNDP, UNEP and other agencies, within the framework of the follow-up to the Rio Conference, was also of great importance. Technology was a key element in sustainable development which must be carefully adapted to the specific needs of each developing country. The human factor was no less central to combating desertification, by effectively involving the population in implementing national policies. Increased attention should be directed to human resources, sustainable development and transfer of technology.

10. Regional cooperation was an essential element for the implementation of environmental action. Israel had joined with other States of the region in a desertification survey and irrigation projects. The Middle East held tremendous potential for economic development, and a variety of joint and multilateral projects for economic cooperation would be of mutual benefit and would enhance the well-being of all parties. Within the framework of the Middle East peace process, detailed and concrete projects for regional cooperation in the protection of the environment were being pursued and advanced.

11. Mr. BURHAN (Turkey) said that environment was a key area that could contribute to the creation of jobs, and that particular attention should be paid to the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Turkey had significant potential for cooperation with other countries on such technologies, and intended to establish a centre for environmentally sound technology which would serve Mediterranean and Black Sea countries.

12. Turkey was formulating a national environmental strategy and action plan with the technical support of the World Bank. Within that framework, the public and private sectors, non-governmental and grass-roots organizations and academic institutions were working together to identify priorities and integrate environmental considerations into development policies. It was also endeavouring to integrate regional initiatives with global targets and had committed itself to the formulation of a regional Agenda 21 for Central Asia and the Balkans, which would be presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development for evaluation.

13. Public participation in environmental decision-making was extremely important. The role of the mass media in raising public awareness and interest in environmental issues was crucial, and the media was an indispensable factor in the success of policies for sustainable development.

14. In preparation for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 1997, more input was needed in the critical areas of sustainability and priorities for future action.

15. Mr. ŽEBRAKOVSKÝ (Czech Republic) said that, despite the hardships that had accompanied his country's economic transition, environmental issues had not been ignored. Although capacity to enforce environmental legislation was still limited, there were encouraging signs of improvement. The Czech Republic would soon join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), underlining the need to harmonize basic environmental regulations and standards with those of OECD countries. To that end, the Government had adopted a comprehensive State environmental policy.

16. He noted with concern that the United Nations Environment Programme appeared to be under financial pressure, and expressed the hope that it would not be obliged to sacrifice any of its important activities. The Czech Republic sought to extend its cooperation with UNEP, and was submitting its candidacy for the UNEP Governing Council.

17. His delegation supported the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development in providing follow-up to the Rio Conference. While the latter's work might be less visible than it had been, it was progressing in the right direction. His delegation supported the priority given to the issues of economic and financial instruments and mechanisms for environmentally sustainable development, the relationship between trade and environment, production and consumption patterns and transfer of environmentally sound technology. It welcomed progress on sectoral issues, in particular the establishment of the intergovernmental panel on forests. The preparation of a

detailed work programme for the further development of indicators of sustainable development was also noteworthy.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.